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WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION
NEWS & INFORMATION SERVICE

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cc: Members of Indonesia round table for their information

FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE PRESS

The following message was sent today by World Council of Churches General Secretary Emilio Castro to the president of the Protestant Evangelical Church in Timor (Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor) and the vice chairman of the Christian Church of East Timor. The Protestant Evangelical Church in Timor, which has some 700,000 members, is a founding member of the World Council of Churches.

The message was sent after widespread reports from press and governmental sources that Indonesian soldiers opened fire on Tuesday (12 November) at a funeral procession of youths in Dili, protesting Indonesian rule of East Timor, a former Portuguese colony annexed by Indonesia in 1976. Reports of the number of deaths ranged between 20 and 115, according to press dispatches.

WCC officials have been informed that the executive committee of the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (Persekutuan Gereja-Gereja di Indonesia) is sending its general secretary to Dili to investigate the situation.

Text of message:

We are profoundly dismayed over the violent deaths of so many innocent people. We urgently request you to convey to their families and to the peoples of East Timor our expressions of deep sympathy in their pain. Be assured of our prayers and active monitoring, with the Indonesian and worldwide Christian community, of further developments. God permit that this tragedy will oblige all to engage in a national dialogue leading to peace in justice.

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches, now 320, in more than 100 countries in all continents from virtually all Christian traditions. The Roman Catholic Church is not a member church but works cooperatively with the WCC. The highest governing body is the Assembly, which meets approximately every seven years. The WCC was formally inaugurated in 1948 in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Its staff is headed by general secretary Emilio Castro, a Methodist pastor from Uruguay.